

A
LADY'S
RELIGION:
IN A
LETTER

To the Honourable *H*
My Lady HOWARD. *(Anne)*

To which is added,
A Second LETTER to the same
LADY, concerning the Import of
FEAR in RELIGION.

By a Divine of the Church of ENGLAND.

Printed for and Sold by R. Akenhead, at
the *Globe*, NEWCASTLE. 1751.

A
LADY'S
RELIGION:

IN A
LETTER

To the Honorable
My Lady HOWARD



A Second Edition
LADY'S
RELIGION

By the Duke of the County of Warwick

Printed for and sold by R. Baldwin, at
the Old, Newcastle. 1751.

THE
PUBLISHER
TO THE
READER.

THE letter of religion, which
is here reprinted, having
taken a course into the world, by
being translated into several mo-
dern languages, I found that a
very particular critical observa-
tion upon it was annexed to the

iv *The* PUBLISHER, &c.

French translation. This letter of remarks was written, as is commonly believed, by a very learned and judicious foreigner, well known in England for his great skill in critical learning. I have published a translation thereof before this impression; omitting what he wrote concerning his friend's translation of the letter into French; well hoping, that the impartial judgment of so able a critick may delight the reader, and recommend the book.

THE

THE
P R E F A C E
T O T H E

French TRANSLATION.

— I Do not know whether this
small treatise will meet
in the world with more criticks
or admirers ; but whatsoever hap-
pens, as I have told you already,
so I tell you again, that in my
judgment it is an excellent book :

A 3

should

vi P R E F A C E.

should any one convince me of the contrary, I shall readily renounce the opinion I have of it. But as I am as yet persuaded, that this small treatise contains nothing but what is every way conformable to reason, and the doctrine which Jesus Christ came to preach upon the earth; so I am ready to declare as much to any one who shall ask my opinion herein. I am always us'd to do so in what relates to any important truth; being of opinion, that a man cannot be silent on such an occasion without betraying his conscience.

Direct

§ 4

If

P R E F A C E. vii

IF I am not mistaken, the design of our author was to make appear, that the Christian religion ought to be levelled and accommodated to the reach of the meanest capacity; and that by consequence it ought not to be confounded with those subtle and abstruse questions with which divines make so great a Noise; and upon which they have wrangled for so many ages: this, I say, is the design which the author of this work propos'd to himself; and in which (it seems to me) he has very happily succeeded; in giv-

viii P R E F A C E.

ing us a true and faithful description of religion, such as Jesus Christ taught mankind; full of wisdom, easy to be explain'd, and every way adapted to the capacity of the illiterate, of women, and of the meanest sort of people, that is to say, of the greatest part of mankind.

Supposing then that religion is for the use of the vulgar and unlearned, which no one, I believe, will be so bold as to deny, I do not see what can reasonably be objected against the design of our author, or his manner of performance;

P R E F A C E. ix

mance; the description he gives us of religion represents it to be of easy examination, and extremely clear and plain. Now, is it not requisite that it should have these qualifications to be within the reach of the greatest part of men? who being necessarily obliged, as our author observes, to provide for their own and families necessities, to perform the common duties of life, cannot apply themselves to the examination of a religion that should be hard to be understood, or requiring a long examination.

Shall

X P R E F A C E.

Shall we object, that our author has forgot several famous controversies in divinity? but if these controversies make any part of religion, we must then retract what we but now supposed, viz. that the Christian religion ought to be for the use of the simple and illiterate, as well as for the learned. We must then say, that religion was then given to men only to exercise their wit, or to improve their talent in disputing with one another; whereas, if we may believe St. Paul, God revealed it to us to teach us to put away our ill habits,

libert

P R E F A C E. xi

habits, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

I see plainly, that to judge of religion, by the idea which the apostle gives us thereof in that place, it is admirably calculated for the use of all those persons who are incapable of a long application of mind, and who have neither penetration nor leisure enough to give up themselves to the study of curious and subtile inquiries, not easily to be resolved.

But I cannot comprehend how the same judgment can be made of

xii P R E F A C E.

of the controversies which have reign'd among divines for so long a time; they are so very abstruse, that even among those who make it their study to explain them to others, there are but few who perfectly comprehend what they turn upon. Yet it is not sufficient to know well the knotty part of the question, unless we can give the true solution of it. But can any thing be more difficult than positively and absolutely to determine a matter among so great a number of different opinions? no sooner hath a divine pass'd his judgment

P R E F A C E. xiii

judgment upon one of these controversies, but he is immediately oppos'd by other divines, who give quite another determination: upon which others arise, who make up a third party follow'd by a fourth, which being contrary to all three, is again attack'd by fresh combatants. Now if religion should consist of such controversies as these, what will become of the poor illiterate laity, who are not able to understand even the very words or terms made use of in these disputes? must poor country people adhere to

xiv. P R E F A C E.

*Catholics are
enjoined to do*
to their curate's or minister's determination blindly, and without comprehending it?

But supposing that we could understand our divines determinations (of which experience shews us the contrary) is that sufficient to give us a right to approve of them? no certainly, for we must also understand the reasons of their adversaries: and then having compar'd the strength of their arguments with that of our divines, we are to embrace and adhere only to that opinion which shall appear most agreeable to reason.

P R E F A C E. xv

son. People may cavil as much as they please; but after all, this is a matter, which, according to the laws of justice and equity, cannot be dispensed with. You and I know very well such and such a minister, who preaches every day against certain hereticks, hath never seen so much as the covers of their books, nor known their Titles; pray y' tell me how can we in good conscience determine ourselves upon what such divines shall lay to the charge of their pretended hereticks? should we approve of a Mahometan

xvi P R E F A C E.

tan who would believe all that a Faquir, who had never read the gospel, should deliver in a mosque against the Christian religion? the case is exactly parallel.

You will perhaps reply, that a preacher of controversy does not only establish his own opinion, but at the same time he confutes that of his adversaries; and tho' he has not read their books, yet he has seen passages taken from them in the books of some learned professor of his own party. But, sir, who will assure you, that this preacher, or professor has given

P R E F A C E. xvii

a true and impartial account of the opinions which they refute? how will you know that they do not disguise or suppress some of the best and strongest of their adversaries arguments? we see daily, that a story, in which nobody has any interest, is changed and falsify'd as it passes through different mouths. With how much greater reason ought we to fear and suspect, that a man who undertakes to refute another in the presence of a numerous assembly, will, either willingly or otherwise, weaken, as much as possible,

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xviii P R E F A C E.

possible, his adversary's reasons, the more easily to destroy them, and thereby to secure to himself the honour of a triumph? therefore it would be an act of great temerity to condemn those whom the chiefs of any party are pleas'd to stile hereticks without reading them.

Besides, tho' our divines and preachers should have given us a faithful account of their arguments, we cannot condemn them upon such a report, without being guilty of the greatest partiality; for a judge that should condemn

P R E F A C E. xix

demn a man upon the bare report of his adversary, without ever hearing what he could say in his own defence, is an unjust judge, tho' in reality his sentence be according to justice. An heathen poet hath long since told us that,

*Qui statuit, aliquid parte inaudita altera
Æquum licet statuerit, haud æquus fuerit.*

If the heathens have known by the sole light of nature, that nobody ought to be condemned, without having been heard, how can we dispense with ourselves for not observing that rule which Jesus Christ himself hath taught

us in these express terms, ' judge
' not that ye be not judged?'

It may possibly be reply'd by
some good persons, that precau-
tions are by no means so neces-
sary in the church as in the civil
state, because divines have such
tender consciences, as not to dis-
guise or weaken the strength and
sense of their adversaries reasons.
But, alas! they know little of the
world who talk after this manner.
We need but hear the divines
themselves in order to be con-
vinc'd, that it is not safe at all to
depend upon their fidelity.

For

P R E F A C E. xxi

For without running back into the history of the first ages, when the bishops, true court-weather-cocks, turn'd about with every little wind, to conform themselves to the pleasure of the prince ; I say, without running back so far, do we not every day hear the divines complaining of their adversaries unfaithfulness, reproaching one another for being made to speak against their own minds, for horrible opinions, for odious and detestable consequences imputed to them, such as they never once dreamt of? nor are these re-

B 3 proaches

xxii P R E F A C E.

proaches to be found only among
divines of different communions;
but even they of the same party,
whenever divided about the ex-
plication of some particular text
or doctrine do the same thing.
One may see them in such a case
falling upon one another with
greater rage and fury, than if
they were writing against the
professed enemies of their society.
We hear of nothing but false im-
putations, imperfect quotations,
and malignant reflections. And
if we believe the reciprocal com-
plaints of each party, we shall
find

P R E F A C E. xxiii

find reason to conclude, that

One's in the right, and

T'other is not wrong.

Furthermore, divines who meet together to examine those scandalous quarrels of their brethren, and put an end to the dispute by a definitive decree or sentence; divines, I say, so assembled wrest and disguise the sentiments of one of the parties, and make'em speak another sense than what was really theirs. The late difference between Monsieur Saturin and Monsieur Jurieu will here present itself to my memory whether I will or

xxiv P R E F A C E.

no. I leave it to you to make the application. One needs only to read the prefaces of these two famous antagonists, to be fully convinc'd, that he would do himself an injury to place a blind and implicit dependance on the truth and fidelity of divines, whether apart or in convocation, and this according to their own confession.

The conclusion from what has been said, is this, that religion does not consist in those subtle and abstruse questions about which divines have been divided in their opinions for so many ages, since
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P R E F A C E. xxv

the common people do not understand them, and are in an absolute incapacity ever to do so; for does not Jesus Christ expressly declare, that he came to preach the gospel to the poor? from whence it necessarily follows, that his doctrine ought to be proportionate to their capacities: and such it is in effect, as any one may see plainly, by reading over the gospel; as the author of this book hath in few words clearly made out.

We may conclude also from hence, that we ought to take care, that

xxvi P R E F A C E.

that we make not ourselves a party with divines, by siding in their passionate contests, since it is not in our power perfectly to know the differences between them: there being no danger in a man's forbearing to give his judgment upon these matters, which he does not understand; but we cannot lawfully condemn both the opinions of a man, and the man himself, (for in true divinity these two go all together) without just and cogent reasons moving us so to do. This is visibly exposing ourselves to the same punishments which

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P R E F A C E. xxvii

which we judge to be due to them whom we condemn so rashly ; that is, if we damn a man for holding such or such opinions, which we ourselves, by our own study and diligence, could not be thoroughly acquainted with, have we not reason to fear lest we also should incur the same damnation for passing so rash and hasty a judgment? the declaration which Jesus Christ hath made us in this case cannot be more express than it is ; ‘ judge not, (saith that divine preacher) that you be not judged ; for with what judgment you judge, you shall

xxviii P R E F A C E.

‘shall be judged.’ And, ‘with
‘what measure you mete, it shall
‘be meted to you again.’ Mat-
thew vii. 1, 2.

To be able to pronounce deci-
sively upon the disputes of divines,
one must plunge himself over-head
in reading a great many large vo-
lumes, full of barbarous and un-
intelligible terms; and also of in-
tricate and endless questions. But
our profession does not allow us so
to play away our time: let us not
then concern ourselves in judging
of such controversies, but rather
leave to the divines the sorry
comfort

P R E F A C E. xxix

comfort of disputing eternally and
bitterly against those who contra-
dict them. I am in doubt whe-
ther they will save themselves by
those means; but this I am sure
of, that we should run the risque
of losing ourselves, if we should
second them in their passionate
contests; not knowing why, or
for what cause we do so. 'Tis
sufficient for us to satisfy our-
selves with the knowledge of God's
will, as it is clearly revealed to
us in the gospel. Let us endea-
vour all we can to put it in prac-
tice; let us love one another, and
do

xxx P R E F A C E.

do unto others as we would they should do unto us: let us live without envying, being contented with that state of life which God has been pleased to call us to; and let us labour in earnest to correct in ourselves what we find amiss, and to make continual improvements in virtue; and by this means, when this life is ended, to secure to ourselves the possession of an eternal happiness. This is properly our business; and it is no small work if we acquit ourselves therein as we ought to do.

Having

P R E F A C E. xxxi

Having thus freely given you my thoughts concerning divines and their disputes, I perceive that I have spoken in too general a manner. We must give every one his due. It is not true that all divines are equally infatuated with theological controversies. There are some who say with St. James, that 'pure religion, and undefiled before God, is to visit the fatherless and the widows, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' Such is the author of the Lady's-Religion; for he is a divine of the church of England:

xxxii P R E F A C E.

England: you know it no other-
wise than by the title, which
oftentimes is deceitful: but I was
informed so by a learned English
gentleman, who writ to me from
London; and assured me of it as
of a known and unquestionable
truth.

Give me leave to add one word
more upon the occasion of writing
this book. You must know that
the author being consulted by the
lady Howard, upon the manner
of preparing one's self for the holy
communion, took occasion from
thence to draw this excellent por-
traiture

P R E F A C E. xxxiii

traicture of the Christian religion,
to the end that he might shew
what are the duties which its pro-
fession obliges us to at all times,
both before, at, and after our pre-
paring for that holy ceremony.
Do you not admire this answer?
for my part I am of opinion, that
our author could not have given
a more excellent proof of his so-
lid judgment, and the knowledge
he hath of the true nature and ge-
nius of religion. The most part
of men reduce religion to some
particular acts of devotion, prac-
tised at certain set times; but
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xxxiv P R E F A C E.

they are grossly mistaken: religion does not consist in certain formalities, depending on certain times and places, but in a constant habit of watching over our conduct, of conquering our passions, and studying incessantly to grow more and more virtuous. This is what your author has happily made good, and wherein he has given us such excellent directions, which, if seriously apply'd to and practis'd, will be of great use and service, in the reformation of manners. This, in my judgment, is one of the best performances in his treatise. A



**LADY'S
RELIGION.**

MADAM,

SINCE God has been pleased
to incline your heart to an
early and serious enquiry after
Religion, so that you are sin-
cerely desirous to know the wil-
of God, in order to do it, I hear-
tily wish you had laid your com-

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mands

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mands upon one more able to assist you, than I am : who, being bred up in an age of speculation and controversy, have addicted myself to the study of divinity more perhaps than to the practice of religion ; and have been (I pray God forgive me) more desirous to furnish my head with notions, than my heart with good inclinations. I thought myself, by my profession, chiefly engag'd in a study how to defend the church by law establish'd against all dissenters, rather than to promote the common cause of serious piety ;

piety; and whilst by the strange unaccountable genius of this age, I have been led aside to mix the study of politicks with that of religion, I have been busily assisting the office of a minister of state, rather than doing the good work of a minister of Jesus Christ.

Now altho' it has pleas'd God to make me in some measure sensible of those by-paths, in which I have sometimes walk'd, to the hinderance of that duty unto which ought intirely to have devoted myself; yet I am apt to fear lest those prejudices and un-

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due prepossessions of mind may still remain within me, by which I shall be prevented from giving your Ladyship such an idea of religion, as is short, plain, and pure, free from superstitious appendages, and separate from every by-interest.

But without doubt such as this is the true spirit of the Christian religion, every line whereof directly tends to make us easy within ourselves, kind and comfortable to one another here, and happy with God hereafter.

That our holy religion is a wise
insti-

institution, will be evident to any one who considers that God is its author, whose wisdom appears in all his works: thus the frame of visible nature being agreeably set together, and having each part of it suited to useful and proper ends, demonstrates itself to be the work of divine wisdom: in like manner the whole plan of pure religion, having also its parts suitable to each other, and every one of them agreeably set to the same good and great design of the whole, does thereby prove itself to be

38 *The* RELIGION

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the contrivance of an all-wise God.

And hereby the wisdom of the Christian religion will particularly appear, because every part of it tends to promote the universal good of mankind; for which reason the divine founder thereof was nam'd Jesus, (that is) Saviour, because his only design was to save us from the prevailing power of sin, and from those miseries in which that evil power would involve us.

Thus temperance promotes our health, justice in our dealings pre-

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vents us from sustaining the revenges of the injur'd, and gains us trust among men, with all the benefits which arise from thence. Charity, by promoting the common good of others, draws back their love and affection to ourselves; while patience preserves quiet within our own breasts, and self-denial, by restraining our extravagant appetites, establishes the just power of reason over us; thereby fitting us for all conditions of life; and thus the law of Christ answers to the character of wisdom, by its agreeableness to
the

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the best design of God in the chiefest good of man: and upon this account Solomon characterized the idea of religion under the name of wisdom.

Beside these moral duties, there are several threats of God's judgments, and promises of his favour contain'd in Christ's institution; the former were wisely design'd to restrain us from immoralities, which are our greatest follies; and the latter to engage us in the practice of virtue, which is our greatest wisdom: the threatnings prepare the way for the promises, and qualify

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qualify us to receive them; in-
asmuch as they shake off our
affections from ill objects, in or-
der for the promises to fix them
upon good ones. We must needs
cease to do evil; before we can
learn to do well.

Now altho' a due consideration
of the divine nature will carry us
on to the belief of a future state;
in which he who is in perfection
the best of all beings, will distin-
guish the good from the bad by
ample rewards and just punish-
ments: yet because every ones
capacity may not be sufficient to
make

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make this wise reflection, therefore Jesus Christ was pleas'd (as the gospel phrases it) to bring life and immortality to light: *i. e.* to give the world full assurance of a future state, in which the just God will distinguish men hereafter, in such a manner as they shall distinguish themselves here; and 'tis the wisdom of every one to preserve this belief in his heart, and bear it always about him, because 'tis the most awful monitor against our committing folly, and yields the strongest encouragement to virtue.

From

From what has been said, your ladyship sees first what is meant by saving a soul, viz. to deliver it from vicious habits and fearful punishments, the fatal consequences of such habits; and by establishing virtue therein, to recommend it to the favour of God: and secondly, that the gospel of Christ was design'd to this very end; and its tendency hereunto is its wisdom. And thirdly, from hence you also perceive in what respect faith in Jesus Christ is said to save us, viz. because this faith is our receiving the Christian moral

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ral for the rule of our lives, and the threats and promises contain'd in the gospel, for the outward motives of our practice according to that rule.

And from these three considerations, summ'd up together, you may examine all the various pretences which differing churches and communions make to the purity of Christian faith, so as to form a right judgment of them; for that communion which manifests itself to have no other design, than to assist its members in saving their souls from the power of
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sin, by the moral and motives
aforemention'd, is certainly the
purest church; and that faith
which has no other tendency, is
the purest faith. So that if you
form yourself upon this principle,
you may pass by all nice specu-
lations, or profound mysteries,
which have no direct tendency to
improve your morals, without
any hazard of salvation.

Secondly, as the Christian in-
stitution is wisely practical, so it
is plain: or in other words, we
may say, that as the wisdom of
the Christian religion appears first
by

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by its being practical, so it appears secondly by being plain. The obscure answers which were given out from the old heathen oracles, are now known to have proceeded from the indirectness of a designing priesthood: who, to maintain their pretence of foretelling what shall come to pass, sent back all those who came to inquire after future events, with doubtful and uncertain answers. And it has been the observation of wise men, that when any one affects to be dark and mysterious in his conversation, either he has
some

some indirect design in so doing, or else whilst he makes an ostentation of wisdom, he does in reality but discover his folly.

Now the wisdom of God cannot be conceiv'd to aim at any other design in communicating itself to us, than the information of our minds in the nature of good and evil, and this in order to direct our choice; and all instruction must of necessity be plain: since 'tis by things easy and familiar, such as at first sight we may apprehend, whereby we can be led on to the knowledge of mat-

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ters more remote and difficult: but obscure and unintelligible doctrines can have no effect upon us beside unprofitable amusement; and whatsoever is by the wisdom of God laid out of our reach, can be no part of our concern.

Farther, to what end did he give us intellectual faculties? surely not to amuse but to improve us, by enabling us thoroughly to understand each part of our holy religion, which directly tends to that end, viz. our moral improvement: as you will soon perceive, if you reduce the Christian
infi-

institution. to its general heads,
which are these.

First, a narration of matters
of fact.

Secondly, a declaration of mo-
ral laws.

Thirdly, a revelation of such
motives which are proper to in-
force this law upon our minds.
And

Fourthly, serious exhortations
to refresh our memories with our
duty; and earnestly to recom-
mend it to our practice.

First, your ladyship sees, that
the matters of fact contain'd in

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the four gospels, and the acts of the apostles (viz. the travels and transactions of Christ and his disciples) are so plainly related, that you understand the relation as easily as you read it. And secondly, all laws must be plain, because they are directions. Now, obscure directions are but delusions. And laws which are dubious and difficult to be understood, are traps and snares. And thirdly, 'tis as necessary that motives should be very intelligible, because their design is to work strongly upon our wills, by convincing

vincing our understandings. Add to this fourthly, that mystical and unintelligible exhortations are ridiculous, upon which account St. Paul forbid religious exercises to be performed in an unknown tongue.

Now as the four gospels and acts of the apostles contain matters of fact, laws, and motives; so the epistles contain exhortations to seriousness and piety, arising from the laws, facts, and motives before-mention'd: and I take these books to be sufficiently comprehensive of the institutions and

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ordinances of Jesus Christ ; which ought indeed to be easily intelligible, because they concern the poor, weak, and unletter'd people as much as the learned.

Nor can I see that the doctrine of Christ was by him, or his apostles, deliver'd first of all into the hands of the learned, to be by them convey'd into the minds of the ignorant ; but, on the contrary, 'tis manifest that our Saviour directed both his discourses and actions immediately to the common people, as well as to the scribe ; and in like manner did
his

his disciples address their preachings and writings.

From all this discourse, concerning the clearness of Christ's institution, you may spare your self the needless trouble of reading abstruse and mysterious points of divinity. Nor need you suffer your self to be amus'd with the pretended deep speculations of profound men, when you have the plain directions of a wise and a good God before you, in following whereof you shall meet with great reward.

Thirdly, the Christian institution

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tion is short. True and genuine religion has always been summ'd up, and gathered together into a narrow compass, by those who best understood it. Thus Micah (6. 8.) speaking of God, saith, He hath shewn thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee? but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. And our Saviour summs up the whole law in our love to God, and our neighbour. And in another place, includes the whole scope of the law and the prophets, in

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in this one rule, Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them; hereby directing us to make a right use of that reason which God establish'd as his oracle in our breasts: to which we may at all times resort; and from whence we may be resolv'd in such cases as concern our duty to one another.

For as by consulting your own reason, you know wherein you are justly dealt with, and wherein you receive wrong; when you are kindly us'd, and when otherwise: so from the same principle
of

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of reason you cannot but know when you deal justly or wrongfully, and when you do kind or ill offices to another; this one short comprehensive rule, taking for its foundation the equality of mankind, in respect of their common nature, renders religion itself a matter sensible unto us.

For I can feel the wound of a sharp slanderous tongue as sensibly as that of a sword; I can feel the wrongs done to myself and family; and am as much sensible of the benefits I enjoy from the just and kind dealings of those with whom

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whom I am concern'd; and hereby I am in the shortest and plainest way admonish'd of my behaviour to others: and if this one short rule were reduc'd to practice, the state of paradise would be restor'd, and we should enjoy a heaven upon earth.

For hereby first all persecutions for conscience-sake, which have occasion'd such violent disorders, and vast effusion of blood, would be at an end, because every one who has any conscience, would most willingly preserve it free from the impositions of men in the

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the worship of God. To compel men by fire and faggot to partake even of a delicious entertainment, is a savage sort of hospitality.

Secondly, all factions in any state would be at an end, if every member thereof were contented, that every one of his fellow-members, who was not an enemy to the government, might, having equal pretence of merit, enjoy equal privileges with himself.

Thirdly, the occasions of war and law-suits would be taken away; since nothing but manifest wrong can be the just cause of either.

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And fourthly, there would be no private quarrels and uneasiness among neighbours ; since by this rule of doing as we would be done unto, all rash censures, sharp reflections, and ungrounded suspicions and jealousies, which are the seeds of private animosities, are taken away. And hereby we may expect a plentiful store of God's blessings among us, who will measure out his kindness to us in the same manner as we measure out ours to one another.

The reason why religion should be both a short and plain institution,

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tution, will appear if you consider the common circumstances and conditions of men in this world. For though your ladyship and many more, have leisure enough to read and digest whole volumes of useful knowledge (if there are any such) yet the greatest part of mankind being necessarily employ'd in making daily provisions for themselves and families, and discharging the common offices of life, cannot attend to any religious institution which is either difficult or tedious.

'Tis

'Tis certain, that the whole life of man is not sufficient for him to read all the controversies which have been written upon pretence of religion; but 'tis as certain, that God never lays on us a greater task than what he affords us both abilities and opportunities to perform: wherefore we may conclude, that since the duties of religion are laid in common upon all, the poor day-labourer must have ability and opportunity sufficient to instruct himself therein, without hindering the constant work of his calling. And in all
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this the wisdom and goodness of God are made known, by adapting our duties to our circumstances of life.

From hence you may save yourself the trouble of reading the long and tedious disputes, which with such intemperate zeal are always in agitation among the several parties of Christians. Indeed the true Christian institution being short, it cannot admit of being spun out into long controversies: and tho' I have read many books of controversial divinity, I do not remember that I have met with

with any one controversy about
the matter of mere religion; as
whether I should maintain in my
heart a high reverence and vene-
ration for Almighty God? whe-
ther I ought to walk before him
in sincerity and uprightness?
whether or no I should be thank-
ful to him for all the benefits
which I have receiv'd from him?
whether I shall submit to his will
with patience, and endeavour to
govern my passions, to bring them
to a due moderation and temper,
by making them subject to the
law of reason? whether I should
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be true to my promise, just in my dealings, charitable to the poor, and sincere in my devotions? whether I should be temperate and sober, modest and chaste, and demean my self in an humble, civil, and agreeable manner towards those with whom I converse? whether I should be heartily sorry when I come short of my duty, and should be watchful in the denial of my irregular appetites, passions, and evil inclinations for the future? in short it has not (that I know of) been disputed whether justice, benignity, meek-

meekness, charity, moderation, patience, and sobriety, should be receiv'd into our affections? or whether we should love God and our neighbour? orthodoxy of faith is made the pretence of controversy, but the one thing necessary is orthodoxy of practice.

I know your ladyship will not be pleas'd with a discourse upon the subject of religion, unless devotion have its due place in it; nor ought it indeed to be left out, because thankfulness is a necessary part of religion, and prayer is the preservative of the whole, A fre-

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quent repetition of our thanks for all the benefits we enjoy, preserves in our minds the consideration of God, as the greatest and best of beings; and thereby nourishes veneration and gratitude. In like manner prayer for pardon of sin, and preservation of our persons, is a constant recognition of the mercy and bounty of God. But prayer against the power of sin, is the actual withdrawing of our inclinations from evil; and prayer for any grace is an actual application of our minds, to attain the particular virtue for which we pray.

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Now

Now although I would not advise you against set hours and forms of devotion, either private or publick; yet I would rather recommend a sort of habitual and occasional devotion, as very proper to preserve the strongest impressions of religion upon your mind.

It may be observ'd, that many who are very punctual in keeping to their exact times and forms of devotion, have fallen short of any visible improvement in virtue. The same pride, frowardness, falshood, covetousness, and bit-

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terness of spirit, have appear'd in many who have been constant frequenters of the publick as well as closet forms of prayer; as if God had not been in all their thoughts. The reason whereof seems to be because their formal petitions supersede their habitual endeavours. Men are apt to think, that since they spend in every day such a portion of time in prayer, they have done all their part: and so they leave God Almighty to take care of the event. And this is indeed all we can do when we make our petitions to

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our benefactors upon earth, viz. offer up our requests to them, either by word or writing, and then only expect their answer.

But 'tis otherwise with relation to God. Our petitions to him must not take off from our constant endeavours to perform that work for which we pray his enablement. And this occasional devotion, which I would recommend, is in its own nature a constant endeavour after virtue, as well as a serious petition for it. For it ariseth from a frequent observation of ourselves in our particular

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particular occurring circumstances;
from which observation suitable
desires will almost necessarily flow.
As if at any time I find that I have
done an ill thing, immediately
upon the discovery, I beg God's
pardon, and resolve to make re-
compence for the ill I have done.
Or if I have designed any evil in
my heart, and presently beg par-
don of him who knoweth the se-
crets thereof; in so doing I have
given check to its progress. In
like manner, if I have spoken
slandrously, rashly, or injuri-
ously concerning any one; and
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upon recollection thereof I ask forgiveness of God, and desire that I may not do the like for the future: but on the contrary, that I may govern my tongue better; in all this I am labouring to withdraw my soul from evil, and to form myself upon a principle of virtue.

Every night and morning are proper times of leisure to call to mind the preservation, support, and advantages we have received the day or night preceeding. And this recollection being accompany'd with thankfulness to our
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great preserver, is the actual continuance and carrying on of our gratitude to God. If I perceive pride or passion to arise in my heart, so that I am apt to put a great value upon every thing I do, and despise others: or if I find myself eagerly concern'd for any little worldly advantage, or any small punctilio of honour; and hereupon I beg of God for an humble spirit, and a heavenly mind; I am herein endeavouring to expel the poison of sin by its proper antidote.

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ders of our minds, as much as the diseases of our bodies. And the causes of a disorder'd mind are much more easily discern'd, than the causes of a bodily distemper. For either my mind is troubled for want or losses, or it may be for the prosperity of others, or want of a revenge, or because I cannot have my will in what I design'd. Upon these, or such like occasions, the proper cure is devotional, in begging God's pardon for my discontent: and being desirous that my will should be submitted to his, who
has

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has taught me that I should not return evil for evil, but that I should love my neighbour as myself. This sort of soliloquy, and occasional mental address to God, is a sure way to compose the disorders of our thoughts. For the growing power of any sin, is most certainly suppress'd by introducing the opposite virtue into our desires.

The same method may be used as to sins of omission. A serious person will observe neglects of common duties, which respect either God or man. He cannot
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but take notice how much he has neglected his business, or his health; how little he has considered God as his owner, governor, and benefactor; and how small a portion of what God has bless'd him with he has laid out upon the good of his fellow-creatures. And if hereupon a man is seriously desirous to become more dutiful to God, more useful to himself, and beneficial to others, he is therein actually bending his mind to supply his former omissions.

This casual devotion arising from the observation of ourselves, under

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under the common circumstances of life (altho' it can have no set times and forms prescrib'd to it) will be very effectual to produce, preserve, and increase a true sense of religion within us. - And if you are pleas'd to apply your thoughts hereunto, as occasion shall direct you, this devotion will soon become habitual, customary and easy. And its returns, which will be frequent and short, will be a continual restraint from evil doing, and an actual exercise of virtue.

3^d This exercise which I have been prescribing, is commonly reserv'd

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to be perform'd all at once, in an actual preparation before receiving the Sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER; which is usually perform'd by help of an artificial catalogue of sins methodically collected out of the Ten Commandments, according to which catalogue, set forms of confessions are drawn up, which the preparant is to take upon content, and without any sort of judgment or discretion of his own, he confesses himself guilty of all the sins therein mention'd together, with all their aggravations, though, it may be,
many

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many of them were of such a heinous nature, as never enter'd into his heart to commit. And if these catalogues and confessional forms are read over once a quarter of a year, or, it may be, once a month against the usual Sacrament-day, the work of preparation is thought to be well pass'd over.

Yet I cannot but think it better to keep a constant customary watch over ourselves, and upon the first discovery of any evil design or action, immediately to retract it within our own hearts, as
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in the presence of God, and by mental prayer, proper to the occasion, arm ourselves against committing the like for the future. Hereby you discharge a duty in its proper season, which is better than to delay it to a prefix'd distance of time: for what is most fresh in memory, will make the most lively impression upon us; but may in a little time be forgotten. Besides, we are apt to turn forms into formalities: and a natural discharge of religious duties must be more improving than an artificial one.

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And by this your Ladyship sees the reason why I have written a discourse of Religion in general, in answer to your letter, wherein you wrote only concerning the Lord's Supper, viz. because I esteem a serious well-inclin'd temper of mind to be the best preparation, either for that, or any other of the ordinances of Jesus Christ, that we may partake of them with advantage and delight.

David advises us to delight ourselves in the Lord, *i. e.* in all his ways and ordinances. And I cannot see why our preparation for
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the Lord's table, and participation at it, should be accompany'd with greater anxieties of mind than our communicating in any other holy office ; such as publick prayer or preaching. We expect the same blessing of God in the improvement of our virtues from all of these ordinances alike. And why with terror upon our minds we should use any of those means which God has ordain'd for our good, I do not understand. A man indeed ought to perform every religious office seriously and soberly ; but fear by amusing

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and distracting the mind, is apt to render the ordinance unprofitable.

Men ought likewise to be discourag'd from coming to prayer, preaching or communicating at the Lord's Table, with a careless, or profane temper of mind: because such unpreparedness does harden men's hearts, and renders the ordinance unprofitable. Such as this was the case of the Corinthians, who in celebrating the Lord's Supper, were so inconsiderate of what they came to do, that some of them were drunk at the Lord's table, as you read *i Cor.*

II.

xi. 21, and to this their profane
behaviour, those texts of Scripture
do particularly relate, which af-
fright some men from, and others
in receiving the Sacrament: on
this account 'twas said, by St. Paul,
' that they were guilty of the body
' and blood of Christ: and to eat
' and drink damnation to them-
' selves, not discerning the Lord's
' body,' ver. 27, 29. *i. e.* by such
a profane and unworthy commu-
nicating, they call down God's
judgments upon themselves: for
so the word damnation ought to
be understood, because it refers to

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the judgments specify'd in the following verse, where 'tis said, that
 ' for this cause (viz. of drunken
 ' communicating) many are weak
 ' and sickly among you, and many
 ' sleep, *i. e.* die.' ver. 30. Now to
 avoid these judgments he exhorts
 them to examine themselves, *i. e.*
 to consider with themselves what
 was the meaning of that duty
 which they were to perform at the
 Lord's table, which duty was this,
 viz. to call to mind the death of
 Jesus Christ. And this commemoration is by St. Paul stil'd Discerning the Lord's body,

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The visible signs of our Saviour's death, which we discern on the Lord's table, do prepare our minds to contemplate a divine person, who for his great charity to the stupid world, suffer'd the highest injustice, with such an invincible patience, and heroick fortitude, as was superior to the sharpest malice of his enemies. Thereby setting before us the brightest example of an unshaken resolution, to do good in spite of all discouragements.

You will perceive, Madam, by this discourse, that the Christian religion

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religion is a wise, a plain, and a short institution; the belief whereof was design'd to save our souls from the power and danger of sin, by ingrafting virtuous habits in our minds. You will likewise perceive, that I hold it necessary to keep a constant watch over ourselves, to repent as often as we perceive ourselves to transgress, and by occasional mental devotion, incline our hearts to observe the law of Christ; and all this in order to build up a habit of virtue within us. You will also perceive, that the contemplation

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of the death of Christ, with all its circumstances, tends to the same admirable end.

And if these or any other means shall work upon you to be generously just, to bear a good will to all men, to do what good you can, and to be unconcern'd for the events of things which are not within your power ; you will be easy within yourself, and satisfy'd in your own conscience, which is the dawn of heaven upon earth ; and you may chearfully communicate at any time.

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SECOND LETTER.

MADAM,

HAVING lately been in conversation with a lady of your acquaintance, she took occasion to speak concerning the letter I wrote to your ladyship; which was publish'd a few years since under the title of A LADY'S RELIGION. She was pleas'd to favour me so far as to say, that the letter did contain a good moral doctrine: but she thought it a blameable omission in me, to pass

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pass over in silence those many doctrines of the Christian faith, which she thought of absolute necessity to our salvation. To this objection I reply'd, that my design in writing the Letter of Religion to your Ladyship, was only to recommend the moral law of our Lord Jesus Christ from its own intrinsic worth, which appears in those many and great advantages, which the serious practice thereof would certainly confer upon mankind. Not intending thereby, to diminish ought from the doctrine of the
Christian

Christian faith, which is therefore worthy of all acceptation; because 'tis a means to enforce the gospel moral upon our practice. Upon which account it is truly said to save our souls, since it promotes our ready obedience to the evangelical law of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And for this reason it was that I advis'd your ladyship, not to perplex your thoughts with those doctrines of faith which are of a mysterious nature; for that such doctrines which we cannot well understand cannot well be apply'd either

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either as motives or means, to engage us in practical Duties. This reply had the good fortune to give the lady some satisfaction as to this point ; but presently she objected to me another omission, which (she thought) was of greater consequence than the former. For Solomon of old (said she) recommended the fear of God as a fundamental of religion. Our Saviour Christ too puts us in mind of the worm which never dies. And St. Paul (if I mistake not) makes use of 'the terrors of the Lord to persuade men to righteousness.'

ousness.' But you (said she) in your letter to my worthy friend, have not only omitted this fundamental point; but in some measure discouraged her as to that part of religion which consists in fear, in saying, 'That

'Fear by amusing and
'distracting the mind,
'is apt to render God's ordinance
'unprofitable.'

La. Rel.
p. 66.

All that I reply'd at that time was, that Solomon meant no more than only to say, that the Fear (or Dread) of God was introductory to religion; 'The Fear of
'God

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‘God (said he) is the beginning
 ‘of Wisdom.’ Prov. ix. 10. But
 he did not esteem the fear of that
 sort as any part of religion; for
 as much as every Duty is ac-
 ceptable to God, must arise from
 our love to him, which is the
 only spring and fountain from
 whence all truly religious per-
 formances can flow: and which
 fails not to cast out all sort of
 fear, except that filial and legiti-
 mate kind which itself naturally
 produceth. And in this manner
 (said I) that great Sage in Israel,
 Jesus the son of Sirack explained
 himself

himself hereupon in his Book of Ecclesiasticus, chap. xxv. ver. 11, 12. 'The love of the Lord passeth
'all things for illumination.' That is, true religion gives the best light and direction to human understanding. And then it follows, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of his love.' That is, the fear of God will prepare us for that love of God, which by its illumination will direct and encourage us in the duties of religion.

To this quotation I added the reason of the thing, by appealing to her own judgment, whether she would not esteem a service done

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to her by her children, her relations, or even her servants, out of a principle of Love, much better than such services which arise only from Fear. Nay, I asked, if a real benefit which was done to her out of no good-will could be so much as thank-worthy.

But these replies gave her no satisfaction ; because the book Ecclesiasticus was Apocryphal ; and because comparisons ought not to be alledg'd for proofs, but should be used only for Illustration.

Wherefore she desir'd me to give her better satisfaction in the point of Fear, as to what part it sustains
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in the affair of Religion, which reasonable command laid on me by her, gave occasion to the following discourse, which I take the liberty to address to your ladyship in this present letter: it being not grounded upon the authority of any Apocryphal writer, but of St. John the Apostle of Jesus Christ; whose words are these, 1 Joh. iv. 18. 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment: he that feareth, is not made perfect in love.'

But since Fear, as well as Love and all the other passions, is fixed

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originally in human nature, it may justly seem somewhat strange to your Ladyship, that any thing should be suppos'd capable of casting it out. For should Fear or any other passion be ejected or eraz'd from the soul, Human Nature would appear imperfect: for as much as every passion serves to a proper use and design in the frame of Man. Thus Fear gives a check to rash proceedings, and Hope gives courage to attempt any good design tho' difficult to be accomplished. Hatred makes the soul to start at the appearance of evil, whilst Love joins it to its truest interest,

interest, and produceth Joy in the constant pursuit of what is good. Sadness discovers to us the vanity of insatiable desires, and unreasonable expectations. And Anger stands like a bold Centinel with sword in hand, to keep insolent behaviour at a distance. Surely these springs of motion which God hath placed in the soul, for the prosecuting of good ends, and avoiding evil, cannot be cast out. Or if any of 'em were excluded, some scar or imperfection in the human temper would be left behind.

Indeed if any of them exceed their proper bounds, so that they

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become malignant, or at least burdensome to nature ; we have reason to reduce them within their just limits. Or if one of them takes upon him to discharge the office which of right belongeth to another (as a man may hate what he should love, and rejoice when he should weep) it ought to be cast out of that unnatural usurpation, and the proper affection ought to be restored to its rightful function, as in the case alledged by St. John in that place upon which I ground my argument. If Fear shall take upon itself to be the Spring-head of all our reverence for Deity, and
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of our obedience to the divine will; in such a case the soul ought to be rescued from the bondage of Fear, and be subjected to the rightful sway of Love: to which affection it owes its natural allegiance. For whensoever a soul is impregnate with a sincere love to God, it will not endure to be engaged in the performance of its duty by fear, but will cast off its yoke, and abhor its usurpation. And in this sense, Madam, I take it, That perfect love casteth out fear.

But since 'tis not in the power of Love totally to extinguish the passion of Fear, but all it pretends

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to, is only to confine it within its proper bounds, so that it may not intrude itself into the sphere of Love. I shall from hence take occasion to set forth to your Ladyship, (1) what fear of God is consistent with the love of God, and what is cast out thereby. (2) what fear of man is consistent with divine love, and what is cast out by it. And (3) what fear of hell is consistent therewith, and what is not.

I. As to the first of these particulars, 'tis evident, that whosoever supposeth God to be 'an Eternal Spirit, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom,

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dom, and goodness, the maker
'and preserver of all things;' (as
our church in her first article de-
scribes him) and hereupon has
form'd himself upon a principle of
high esteem and humble affection,
as also of love and gratitude to his
great owner, governor, and bene-
factor; cannot but be affected with
a reverential awe, and fear of mis-
behaving himself in the presence
of God. Such a one will fear the
Lord of heaven and earth, walk-
ing humbly before him; and thro'
a watchful denial of himself, he
will hold no confederacy with any
known sin. Nor will he dare to
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do an unjust action, tho' never so much to his advantage. And all this, because he fears to offend him whom he loves, and esteems as the fountain of all good.

According to this notion, good men have been called the *Children of God*; with respect to the dutiful behaviour of an obedient child to an indulgent father. For by how much such a one is sensible of the tender affection his parent bears to him, by how much the more sensible he is that all his present enjoyments and hopes of future advantage, are deriv'd from the constant loving disposition of his
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parent, so much the more will he indulge within himself a constant fear of offending. But then this fear hath no torment, neither is it imposed upon the child, but is his own free choice, his joy, and satisfaction; and always increasing in proportion, to the love he bears to his father.

But on the contrary, Madam, fear which hath torment, such as St. John speaketh of will be cast out by a love to God. For when with delight we see that the world is constantly supported by the divine bounty; why should we suffer ourselves to be tormented with
anxious

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anxious cares and fears for food and raiment? which two things in conjunction are a sufficient fund of contentment, according to an universal rule of reason laid down by St. Paul, 'Having food and 'raiment let us be therewith content.' 1 Tim. vi. 8.

Inconsistent therefore with the love of God, is such a fear as is selfish. Where the smart of punishment for sin is dreaded more than the displeasure of God. In the spirit of this slavish fear, Pharaoh made some faint resolutions, to set an enthralled people at liberty: but as soon as the smart of

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of God's rod was allay'd he recover'd his former cruelty, and resolv'd to perpetuate their bondage. Thus a wolf or lyon, under the immediate discipline of a severe keeper, holding the rod of correction in his hand, may suffer a lamb to lie safely within his reach; but this abstinence from present rapine changes not the nature of the beast. The one is not less a wolf, nor the other less a lyon, than at other times.

Besides, Madam, there is this great inconsistency between the love of God, and such a slavish fear as has been now describ'd,
that

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that he who loveth God will take delight and high satisfaction, in contemplation of the divine power, wisdom and goodness; but he who serveth God out of a principle of slavish fear, which always compels him to act contrary to his inclination, can take no delight in the contemplation of God. But rather wisheth that there were no knowledge in the most High to discern, or no power to punish. In this respect 'tis, that the fool hath said in his heart there is no God: the fool is a wicked man; the language of the heart is desire. So that the plain sense of that saying

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ing is, that an ill-inclin'd man, wilheth that there were no God.

But if you will consider Deity as 'twas describ'd by the Philosophers of old, you will find the divine nature set forth in the most lively manner by Pythagoras as he is cited by Justin Martyr in his exhortations to the Greeks. Thus:

‘ God is surely one, nor is he re-
‘ sident (as some imagine) with-
‘ out the structure of the universe,
‘ but is intire within himself: sur-
‘ veying all generations in a com-
‘ pleat circle. He is the tempe-
‘ rament of all ages, the agent of
‘ his own powers and works: the
‘ prin-

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‘ principle of all things indivi-
 ‘ dual: the light of the heavens,
 ‘ and the parent of all: the life
 ‘ and animation of every crea-
 ‘ ture: the motion of all succes-
 ‘ sions and alterations.’ I was
 saying, that if you shall thus con-
 sider Deity as the vital spirit of
 the universe, you will find suffi-
 cient engagements to the love
 thereof, from every observation
 you will make upon nature.
 Upon this consideration of Deity
 it may be said, That ‘ the hea-
 ‘ vens declare the glory of God,
 ‘ and the firmament shews his
 ‘ handy-work,’ Psal. xix. 1. And
 what

what sort of affections can this declaration of heaven and earth raise in the temper of man besides esteem, complacency, and gratitude? which being put together, make up that composition of love, which casteth out fear.

'Tis this contemplation of nature, Madam, 'tis this close observation of that subserviency which the inferior and smaller systems of natural Beings, pay to the greater and superior, which raises an high esteem for the wonderful artificer, by 'whom all things 'live and move and have their 'beings:' by whom every office

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of sensation is performed: so that we may ' taste and see how good ' the Lord is: ' Psal. xxxiv. 8. And from thence conclude by sensible demonstration, that all delight is the creature of Deity, continually obliging us to a comfortable participation of divine bounty, and thereby to a constant return of praise and thanks.

And if that small portion of experimental knowledge in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, to which in this life we may attain; can raise us to such a sincere love of God as can expel all the torment of fear; surely an eternal

eternal progressive knowledge of that inexhaustible subject, may be esteem'd an eternal fountain of delight.

But at present, what umbrage can be given to fear from the contemplation of Deity? Can that divine wisdom by which all things are contrived for our use, or that divine power by which all things are supported for our constant satisfaction, suffer any one to give way to superstitious fears? As if Deity were austere and rigorous, easily provoked by some small, and perhaps unavoidable mistakes of creatures; and as easily ap-

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peas'd with some slight formalities and external performances.

This false idea of Deity, Madam, cannot be gathered up from your observation of nature ; but must arise from that narrow, and froward temper, which the weaker sort of men too frequently feel within themselves. And altho' the wise Solomon built an house for the Lord, which was accepted of God, as all the Jewish rites were, through divine condescension ; yet St. Stephen speaking of that temple, makes this observation thereupon. ' Howbeit the
' most high dwelleth not in tem-
' ples,

‘ples, as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool, what house will ye build me, saith the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? hath not my hand made all these things?’ Acts vii. 48. In like manner, although thro’ the same condescension God accepted the sacrifices of Israel, yet the prophets bare witness that he did not require or command those services. Indeed this appears in the very beginning of the Levitical book of Moses, where ’tis thus written: ‘And the Lord called to Moses out of the tabernacle of the congregation,’
H 3 ‘saying,

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saying, speak unto the children
 of Israel, and say unto them, if
 any man of you bring an offer-
 ing unto the Lord, ye shall bring
 your offering of the cattle, even
 of the herd, and of the flock.
 If his offering be a burnt-sacri-
 fice of the herd, let him offer a
 male without blemish; he shall
 offer it of his own voluntary will
 at the door of the tabernacle of
 the congregation before the Lord.
 Lev. i. 1. &c. So that sacrifices
 seem to be as much a human as a
 divine institution. And it may
 without any absurdity be sup-
 posed, that Cain and Abel, or any
 antient

antient inhabitants of the world, might appoint some certain day to join their stores together, to the intent that they and their families might 'eat and drink to the glory 'of God,' as St. Paul speaks. 1 Cor. x. 31. *i. e.* whilst they were partakers at a plentiful table, they might express their thanks to God who furnished it out for them. 'Tis possible also, that the original design of this thanksgiving festival might in after-times be forgotten by posterity, who might yet retain the custom of sacrificing upon a mistaken supposal that the solemn slaughter of their cattle was

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a thing well-pleasing to God ; because it was (as to them it seem'd) a religious observation of their fore-fathers. And from hence it might come, that sacrifices and offerings were once the catholick religion of the world. But for an unprejudiced person to conceive that the Deity should be pleas'd with the slaughter of hecatombs, is a supposition of a strange nature. And whence could it arise, but from the misleading of fear, which induced weak men to believe, that God being angry with them for their sins, must have his anger appeased by the slaughter of beasts, that

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that he may be prevailed upon to spare the lives of men.

Now to give your Ladyship a general account, how this matter stood of old ; as far as I can reach into antiquity, it appears that fear gave to mankind one moiety of their notion of God. For 'twas generally believed of old, that Deity was made up of two co-ordinate powers ; the one for good ; the other for evil. And 'tis a long time past, since men's fancies found out names for the chymetical objects of their fears. So of old the Hebrews called these two co-ordinate principles by the
names

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names of Gad and Meni. The Egyptians called them Osyris and Typhon. In the Greek inscriptions upon funeral urns are frequently met the letters *Theta* and *Kappa*, the initial letters of *Theois* and *Kakois* the unlucky Gods. The Romans expressed the same thing by Joves and Vae-joves; hard names which I am forc'd to trouble your Ladyship with. And the astrologers carry on the same notion to this day, under the style of favourable and malignant aspects. I cannot tell how long it is since the Persians received this opinion under the
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names of Oromasdes and Arimanius; but it may be computed how long 'tis since Manes Manichaeus, a Persian by birth, and a Christian by profession, revived that ancient opinion of the Persians, which by the Christians of that age, was called the Manichaean heresy; and was a belief of two co-ordinate suprenie powers, the one good, the other evil. This heresy was first broached in the reign of Aurelian the Emperor; and in the year of our Lord 273.

Doubtless, 'twas the prevailing power of fear, which armed Jupiter with his thunderbolt, Mars with

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with his spear, and Apollo with his bow. And what can your Ladyship think of those parents who forced their children to pass through the fire to Molech, tho' it were only to scorch their skins, which is the mildest interpretation of those words of Moses whereby that sort of cruelty was forbidden, Lev. xviii. 21. What can your Ladyship think of those parents, but that they were scared out of their wits? And what opinion can you conceive of those parents who burnt their children to Adramelech and Anamelech the Gods of Sephervaim, 2 Kings xvii. 31. but

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but that they were frightened out of all sense of humanity. For, what can be discovered in the philosophick notion of Deity, which may give umbrage to such enormous superstitious fears? But on the other hand, might not Pythagoras well be styled a divine philosopher, who came into Italy in the reign of Tarquinius Superbus (as Cicero informs us) to give the then barbarous people, such a true notion of Deity, as might dissipate all superstitious fears, and afford a solid comfort? For if Deity be no other than the vital spirit of the universe, and
common

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common parent of mankind, reverence, love and gratitude, become due from man to God: and Pythagoras might well ask the question, why men invented spectres to frighten themselves withal. As Ovid represents him speaking:

Quid Styga, quid tenebras, & nomina vana timetis?

And for the same reason was it, Madam, that Moses commanded the Jews to bring their sacrifices to the door of the tabernacle, viz. that they might not be offer'd to fearful objects, which the scripture

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ture call Devils. ' They shall no
 ' more offer their sacrifice to de-
 ' vils,' Lev. xvii. 7. Upon which
 text it may be observed, 'that the
 original word which in our trans-
 lation is rendred devils, is by La-
 tin interpreters set forth by most
 odious, frightful, and horrid ideas.
 Such as *pilosi, villosi, hirsuti, birci,*
Satyri, horridi, horrifici. And
 particularly Bochart in his trea-
 tise upon the animals mentioned
 in the Old Testament, comment-
 ing upon the text of Moses, says,
 that this word which we translate
 devils, was given as a name to the
 idols of Canaan, *quod horripilatio-*
nem

nem iis incutiunt quibus apparent ;
i. e. because their figures were so
terrible, that a man's hair would
stand an end at their appearance.
And whoever will read the chap-
ter last cited, will find Moses pre-
venting Pythagoras in his design
of dissuading men from entertain-
ing a frightful idea of Deity ; and
commanding that since sacrifices
were the worship then in use, his
countrymen should thereby pay
their homage to that God, whose
character was Gracious and Mer-
ciful, the great Deliverer of that
particular people, and one who
still reserved a particular kindness
for

for them. This character is in its nature fitted to raise veneration, love, and hope; but fear is an unbecoming treatment of such a Deity.

And yet behold, Madam, a greater than Pythagoras is here. I mean St. John, who in his epistle which at first I cited, sets forth the character of God, by the ideas of light and love, 1 John i. 5. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' And in another place he gives the most amiable character of Deity, saying, that 'God is love,' 1 Joh. iv. 8.

As to the first of these two characters

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acters of God, that illustrious one of light, you cannot suppose it to be an object of fear, but rather of comfort and joy ; for as much as the morning light has been always observed, to dispel those fears which have been occasioned by the foregoing darkness ; 'tis this daily flowing tide of brightness, which tinctures the earth with its glory, rendering it thereby, both useful and delightful to mankind. On the contrary, how dreadful was it once for the Egyptians to sit under that thick mist of palpable darkness, which blotted out three whole days? In how melancholy

lancholy a manner did they pass away their time, when 'they saw not one another, neither 'arose any one from his place?"

Exod. x. 23. But how joyful an hour was that wherein the sun arose to dispel the horror they had so long lain under? And look! what light is to the eye, that same thing is knowledge to the mind. The instruction of God is as delightful and refreshing to the soul, as the rising sun to a traveller, who has been beating out his way all night. By divine instruction a man finds a plain way through the world, notwith-

I 2 standing

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standing all the by-paths of fancy and persuasion ; hereby he sums up the whole of religious duty in reverence for God, care over ourselves, and kindness to our fellow-creatures : each part whereof is delightful and recreative to the spirit of man. Reverence for the Deity is the privilege of man above the beast, which knows not that he is in the care and keeping of God. But 'tis the glory of man to know and acknowledge his gracious owner, governor, and benefactor.

As to the other two summary parts of divine instruction, care
over

over ourselves, and kindness to our fellow-creatures, the performance of those duties, carries nothing in it of fear or torment, but is pleasant as 'light to the eye' and 'marrow to the bones.' The first of these two duties is preservative of soul and body, from the dismal effects which unruly passion, and ungoverned appetite too frequently produce. And as 'tis a horrid spectacle to behold a man out of the use of himself, as to have seen 'Saul breathing out' threatenings, and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, 'making havock of the church,'

I 3 'entering

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‘entering into every house, hal-
 ‘ling men and women and com-
 ‘mitting them to prison.’ Acts
 viii. 8. So on the contrary, how
 pleasant must it have been to have
 seen his ‘labours of love:’ to have
 been a witness of his ‘weariness
 ‘and painfulness, his often watch-
 ‘ings, his hunger and thirst, his
 ‘cold and nakedness,’ by reason
 of his ‘great care of all the chur-
 ‘ches which came upon him
 ‘daily.’ 1 Cor. xi.

Besides, let any one but con-
 sult his own experience, and see
 if there be any thing frightful or
 tormenting, in being conscious of
 his

his own good will and affection to mankind; or in being conscious of the merited love and esteem which he has gain'd from others thereby. And let a man examine himself if there be any pleasure which the world affords equal to the satisfaction he receives from relieving the necessities of his fellow-creatures, according to the instruction of God.

But on the other hand, where unwarranted traditions, and vain imaginations of men prevail over the light of God, the minds of men will be perplexed with dark suspicions and tormenting fears.

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As for instance, if it be not certain that St. Peter was at Rome, all the pretences which uphold the Roman-catholick communion fall to the ground: then there is no successor in power with the keys of heaven, nor any infallible apostolical commissioner to guide the flock of Christ. And that St. Peter ever was at Rome is no part of divine instruction. Now since this great, and, as they pretend, universal flock of Christ are uncertain of their guide, how must their doubts and fears multiply upon them, in relation to the way they ought to take? What security can they

they have, that the pardons and indulgences granted by the holy father are ratified in heaven? What security that their pilgrimages, penances, masses, with their adoration of a God baked in an oven, and such like inventions of their high priest, shall be accepted by the greatest and best of beings? How shall they be sure that they walk not in the paths of darkness, but that they are the children of light, drawing towards the inheritance of the saints in glory? But when a man hath a sincere respect to the light and instruction of God, he will thereby be made free from
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all those uncertainties, jealousies and fears, which torment the minds of the superstitious.

Now, Madam, if hereupon you should ask how you should know, that the books of scripture contain'd in the Old and New Testament are the real true light and instruction of God; I think you may easily satisfy yourself as to that matter. For though many particular texts therein contained cannot be nicely understood without some knowledge of antient customs, to which the expressions allude; yet without any antient or modern learning, let any one
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take a view of the whole analogy, and suitable agreement of the doctrines contained in both Testaments, and he will find that the design of all those writers was, to set forth such an admirable rule of life as was fit for God to give, and for man to receive. And if you will compare this moral instruction with the superstitions of Heathens or Papists, your eye cannot discern the difference between the light of Sun and Moon more clearly, than your mind will distinguish between religion and superstition.

Those

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Those holy books contain nothing of popery or priestcraft, or of any other design, but only to direct us to such ways and means, as are best fitted to work up human nature to the highest degree of virtue it is capable of in this life. And therefore whosoever shall endeavour to assert any low, self-designing opinion from holy writ, is the greatest enemy thereunto. For as much as every mean, base, selfish opinion, or any such doctrine which is contrary to the common rights, liberties, or advantages of mankind, being asserted from thence, is a mill-stone
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hung upon the book of God, directly tending to sink its authority, and render it suspected in the world. Upon this foot St Paul referr'd himself to the judgment of the Corinthians, saying, ' I speak unto wise men, judge ye what I say.' 1 Cor. x. 15. Answerable whereunto I refer it to the judgment of your Ladyship, whether a sincere love of the light and instruction of God, will not dispel those dark fears, which superstitious fancies are apt to create.

But St. John saith, that ' God is love.' 1 Joh. iv. 8. and therefore whatsoever proceeds from him

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him must not be frightful, but lovely. Thus Solomon speaking of religion under the character of wisdom, saith, 'her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' Prov. iii. 17. And St. Paul exhorting the Philip-
pians to virtuous practice, saith, 'Whatsoever things are lovely think on these things.' Phil. iv. 8. Nor was the Gentile a stranger to this doctrine: For that which is good is lovely, was the saying of an old Greek poet Theog. How lovely is it to behold the Creation of God, wherein all things that fall under our cognizance, discover
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ver a wise design, by which every event tends to the interest of the universe! and the character by which mankind doth most resemble Deity, is in the highest degree lovely. I mean a virtuous motion of mind towards the good of our fellow-creatures. For by how much the affections of a man are fixed upon publick benefit, by how much the more any one endeavours to oblige mankind, by so much are his actions render'd lovely; especially when this disposition of mind is carried on without the prospect of retaliation. For this is the disposition of God
towards

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towards man, as David saith.
 ' Like as a father pitieth his chil-
 ' dren, so the Lord pitieth those
 ' that fear him.' Psal. ciii. 13.
 The natural affection of the father
 is fully answered by the benefit
 which the child receives, without
 aiming at any other advantage.
 And in this respect the benevo-
 lence of noble founders, and pub-
 lick benefactors, as likewise the
 bounty of great Princes, such
 whose high stations set them above
 self-interest, do render their ac-
 tions most lovely; because they
 are incapable of any return, be-
 sides that joy which naturally flows
 from

from the advantages others receive by their means.

Add to this, Madam, that a sincere love of virtue, excludes all strong self-interested hopes, as well as dismal fears. And thus ' Moses when he was come to ' years, refus'd to be call'd the son ' of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing ' rather to suffer affliction with ' the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a ' season.' Heb. xi. 24. Josephus relates that matter thus: Thermutis, the daughter of Pharaoh, who had preserved the life of Moses when very young, presented

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him to her father when grown up, desiring that he might be appointed to succeed in the government, she having adopted him for her son. How lovely was it in Moses generously to refuse these court-offers of greatness, in order to attempt the deliverance of his brethren! 'Twas not then understood that an eager pursuit after court-preferments, was the mark of a true patriot, but the heroick and lovely disposition of Moses which St. Paul sets forth, was a generous compassion to his countrymen, whom he was willing to rescue from slavery with the

the hazard of his life ; as appear'd by his vigorous opposing the Egyptian, whom he found smiting an Hebrew, Exod. ii. 12. And likewise by perfecting their deliverance after he had conducted them into Canaan. For supposing the good Moses instead of following the advice of Jethro, and setting up the judgment-seats of Israel, should have been prevailed upon, to have established an Egyptian ministry in Canaan, he would thereby have tarnished that lovely character of a deliverer of his country, and lover of his brethren ; which last character is ac-

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cording to St. John, the character by which one may know, if he be passed from death to life. 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren, he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.'

1 John iii. 14. *i. e.* in the state and under the sentence of death, as our commentators explain it.

Whereas 'he that loveth his brother abideth in the light,'

1 John ii. 10. Such a one resembles God, who is the 'Father of lights.' Jam. i. 17.

And should we consider God with St. James as a common father

ther of comforts, who maintains the order of the universe, providing suitable maintenance for all living creatures, 'Who maketh
' his Sun to shine on the evil and
' the good, and sendeth rain on
' the just, and on the unjust;
Mat. v. 25. as our Saviour saith:
can we suppose such a fatherly disposition as this is, does any way tend to strike terror into our hearts? and to lay it there as the foundation of all our duties. Surely nothing but the willing affection of a dutiful son can be a suitable return, for the constant love of an indulgent father. To conclude

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this argument, I think I may say, Madam, that altho' fear may prevail upon some ill men to abstain from evil, yet 'tis only the love of virtue, which fixes our inclinations upon good things. And I hope I may also add, that as a good man has no need of fear, to assist him in his pursuit after virtue; so is it likewise evident, both from natural, and revealed religion; that such a one can have no cause to be afraid of God.

II. As to the fear of men, which was the second thing I was to consider, 'tis plain, Madam, that if your ladyship shall observe men
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to act in subordination to God, by how much the love of God prevails over you, so much the more fearful you will be of giving them offence. Our parents under God are our immediate owners, governors, and benefactors. And the honour which hereupon is due to them, includes an awful respect towards them; and if the magistrate be indeed the 'minister of 'God to us for good' (as St. Paul speaks) every man will be cautious of giving him offence. In such a case, 'tribute is to be given to whom tribute is due, 'fear to whom fear, and honour 'to

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‘to whom honour.’ 1 Cor. xiii.
But since good magistrates are a
terror only to evil-doers, a sincere
lover of virtue, is far from fear
upon that account.

But if your Ladyship shall con-
sider men as acting in opposition
to God, you may be allowed to use
all necessary precautions, to pre-
serve yourself from their tyranny.
Nor is there any thing cowardly,
mean, or depressive of your spirit
in this sort of fear, ‘Beware of
‘men (saith our Saviour to his
‘disciples) for they will deliver
‘you up to the councils, and
‘scourge you in their synagogues;
‘but

‘ but if they persecute you in one
‘ city fly into another. Mat. x.
‘ 17. 23. Nor shall he be afraid
‘ of evil tidings whose heart is
‘ fixed upon God,’ saith holy Da-
vid. Psal. cxii. 7.

But then will a man find him-
self surrounded with tormenting
fears, and dreadful suspicions;
when through want of a sincere
love to his great owner, governor
and benefactor, he hath cast off all
sincere and upright walking, as
in the presence of the invisible
all-seeing God: when he hath cast
off that righteousness, justice, ho-
nesty, and faithfulness, as would
not

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not fail to engage mankind in his support; and also to yield such a peace of conscience as will not suffer him to be disturbed, though the earth should shake, and the heavens be dissolved. And then may a nation be afraid of evil tidings, when the love of God (which is chiefly made manifest by love to our brethren) waxeth cold, and when a feverish heat of dissension, arising from a wretched base self-interest, casts them into parties, when publick weal is regarded only, as it serves private ends; as the loud acclamation, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians,'

was

was encouraged by the gain which the silversmiths made by the temple of that Goddess. When public trusts shall be coveted by some to please their vanity and sensuality, by others, to gratify their sordid love of money, and by most to enslave their brethren; what wonder if upon any extraordinary event, 'Men's hearts shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth?' Luke xxi. 26. As our Saviour foretold, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which was brought to pass by their fatal divisions. How
dreadful

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dreadful were the tidings of Israel's captivity, which were brought to them by the prophet Jeremiah? and were grounded on their want of love to their brethren, whom for private interest they enslaved, when according to the law of the Sabbatical year, and the law of the Jubile, they ought to have made free. The words of Jeremiah upon this occasion are these:

‘ Thus saith the Lord, ye have not
 ‘ hearkened unto me in proclaim-
 ‘ ing liberty every one to his bro-
 ‘ ther, and every man to his neigh-
 ‘ bour. Behold! I proclaim a li-
 ‘ berty to you, saith the Lord, to
 ‘ the

‘ the sword, to the pestilence, and
‘ to the famine. And I will make
‘ you to be removed to all the
‘ kingdoms of the earth.’ Jer.

xxxvii. 17. The effect of this prophecy is visible at this day, though the first fulfilling of it was by the arms of a Babylonish tyrant; who was in that day the great patron of idolatry and tyranny; himself being no more than a king of slaves.

But yet Madam, a true Israelite in whom was no guile, who loved the Lord with all heart, and his neighbour as himself, who was neither ambitious, nor covetous,
nor

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nor over-sollicitous concerning the honours, riches or pleasures, which the world affords, who walked watchfully in the denial of himself, so far as to hold no confederacy with any known sin, who when he has fallen from his duty, has recovered himself by true repentance; who has been true to his promise, just in his actions, charitable to the poor, and well inclined to all Men: who could forgive injuries, laying aside all thoughts of revenge; who could be meek, calm, and gentle, when in the hands of furious and violent spirits; who was of a tender dispo-

disposition, being as ready to prevent men from falling into immoralities and dangers, as he was to compassionate them in adversity: such a one as could be moderate in power, and humble in prosperity, whose actions discover a love to his country, free from the byas of private interest, and whose hearty inclinations were towards the good of mankind. Such a man as this, was privileged from the fear of evil tidings, and was commissioned to hope that through the voice of the Lord the Assyrian shall be beaten

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‘ beaten down, who smote with a
‘ rod.’ Isa. xxx. 31.

Nay, Madam, ’twas to chear
up the heart of such an Israelite
as this, that the Prophet Isaiah
foretold the downfal of the Baby-
lonish grand Monarch; whose
slaves usually stile him *the* king,
as if there were no other king
besides him: saying, ‘ Tophet
‘ is ordain’d of old, yea, for *the*
‘ king it is prepared, he hath
‘ made it deep and large: the
‘ pile thereof is fire and much
‘ wood: and the breath of the
‘ Lord like a stream of brimstone
‘ doth kindle it.’

III.

III. As to the fear of hell, Madam, I have very little to say ; for if your Ladyship considers hell as a consummate state of wickedness, doubtless a virtuous person is at the greatest distance from thence. He who out of a sincere love to God is careful to know, and conscientious to do his will, submitting not only his words and actions, but the very purposes of his heart thereunto : he in whom the love of God, hath cast down all pride and haughtiness both of heart and carriage, having reduced his passions to a

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due moderation, and temper; who through his love to God, esteems the world no more than it deserves, and makes use of it only to gratify a generous disposition of mind, ready to compassionate and help in adversity; this man is so far from any fear of hell, that he has in some degree, the actual possession of heaven upon earth: and by being conscious of such his love to God, he is actual partaker of those divine joys, which alone we can suppose to affect the saints in glory; that is, such a delight as
never

never surfeits, nor cloyes, though
never so frequently renewed, or
ever so long continued, and such
as leaves no ill relish behind it.

But on the other hand, if a man
bears no true love to the great and
good God, but dares commit sin
with presumption; if he be go-
verned by unruly passions, insa-
tiable desires, or by an ambitious,
covetous, or malicious temper;
if he be moved by envy, at the
prosperity of some, or by revenge
for small offences taken at others;
this man is already sensible of hell
upon earth. And tho' a thousand

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inventions may be found out to quiet the evil spirit, which arises from the self-consciousness of his own wicked heart; yet nothing can alleviate his torment, because nothing can separate conscience from the soul of man.

'Tis true, Madam, that sometimes the instrumental parts of religion are call'd in aid, to allay the terrors of a hell within; and these devotional performances join'd with a strong fancy, may for a time have some effect upon an enthusiastick temper: as David's harp had upon Saul's melancholy,

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lancholy, so long as the musick lasted. But yet the dreadful apprehensions of guilt will not totally be extinguished, till our earnest endeavours have recovered us to a sincere love of God.

Having thus endeavoured to shew what fear of God, of man, and of hell, is inconsistent with the love of God; I hope it will appear that I did no ill, when I offered to shew your ladyship yet *a more excellent way*, that of *charity or love*; and advis'd you in some measure, to soften the power of fear in your religious practices,

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practices, and devotional performances. I beg your ladyship's favourable construction of what I have written in this letter, meaning thereby to testify the respect due to you from

Your Ladyship's

Most obliged, &c.

F I N I S.



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